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Themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2005 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note is intended to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2005 of the Economic and Social Council. It contains proposals by Member States as well as by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. Proposals by intergovernmental bodies are also included in the note. The Secretary-General proposes that **the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider the following theme for its 2005 high-level segment: "Achieving the development goals of global conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals — challenges and opportunities"**.

The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2003/6, welcomed the request by the Assembly for the establishment of a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of the Council and expressed its determination to finalize the list of cross-sectoral thematic issues and the multi-year work programme for its coordination segment, with the aim of reaching a decision before the substantive session of 2004.

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1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2005 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council. It also decided that, at the annual substantive session, the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision during the substantive session, if possible, but in any case not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

A. Proposals by Member States

3. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 17 February 2004, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Viet Nam: "United Nations role in enhancing international cooperation to combat epidemics";

(b) Mexico: "Review of progress achieved in implementing the Millennium Development Goals";

(c) Ecuador: "Debt relief and its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals";

(d) Ireland, on behalf of the European Union: "The contribution of the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Declaration, to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals";

(e) Iceland: "Social and economic development: the importance of peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict management";

(f) Nepal:

(i) "Mainstreaming the least developed countries in the process of globalization by developing explicit policies and action plans on special and differential treatment for least developed countries, helping their trade and transport facilitation programmes and building other capabilities in accessing the world market";

(ii) "Special and integrated efforts on the part of the United Nations system, international multilateral institutions and industrial countries (of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)) in meeting the Millennium Development Goals of least developed countries with the aim of reviewing the existing instruments, including the Barbados

Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA)";

(iii) "International support to conflict-ridden developing countries in the areas of capacity development for conflict management and transformation through peace process negotiation, reconstruction and rehabilitation in view of the negative effects of the existing and impeding conflicts of various extent and intensity in these countries".

B. Proposals by bodies of the United Nations system

4. The United Nations Secretariat consulted the bodies of the United Nations system and received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) World Food Programme: "The role of the United Nations system in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the impact on poverty eradication";

(b) World Meteorological Organization: "United Nations coordinated effort to achieve safe drinking water and sanitation for all";

(c) United Nations Population Fund: "Promoting integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits to reach the Millennium Development Goals expeditiously and achieve sustainable development";

(d) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:

(i) "The Council's own effectiveness and future role in addressing key economic and social policy issues within the multilateral United Nations system";

(ii) "Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals";

(e) United Nations Industrial Development Organization: "Economic Development Strategies to meet the Millennium Development Goals: the Role of the United Nations";

(f) International Monetary Fund: recommended that given the envisaged focus in the General Assembly on the Millennium Declaration in 2005, it might be useful to select a theme that would complement that discussion;

(g) International Atomic Energy Agency: "Goals, timetables and expected performance for the gradual but systematic transfer of United Nations management and technical responsibilities and roles to qualified national institutions in developing countries for operational activities in the economic, social and related fields, including new regional cooperation models";

(h) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

(i) "Poverty as a violation of human rights";

(ii) "Mobilizing resources for sustainable development and poverty eradication: a Cultural approach to health";

(iii) "The contribution of science for meeting the Millennium Development Goals";

(i) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development:

(i) "Coherence between the international trading system, international monetary and financial arrangements and national development strategies";

(ii) "The development dimensions of the evolving multilateral trading system";

(iii) "Globalization, migration and labour mobility";

(iv) "The linkages between trade and poverty";

(j) United Nations University:

(i) "Global water crisis: concrete plan of action, including resource mobilization and institutional modalities, for a comprehensive United Nations system-wide initiative, with a shorter-term objective of attaining Millennium Development Goal 7 on access to safe drinking water";

(ii) "Achieving poverty reduction, human development and food security in conflict-affected countries";

(k) International Fund for Agricultural Development: "Rural finance: a critical tool in poverty reduction";

(l) International Maritime Organization:

(i) "International cooperation to enhance social security and ensure sustainable socio-economic development";

(ii) "War: the mortal enemy of development in Africa; sustainable development can only be achieved with international commitment to peace";

(m) International Labour Office: "Decent and productive work for young people".

C. Proposals by intergovernmental bodies

5. In its Plan of Implementation (see A/CONF.199/20, chap. I), the World Summit on Sustainable Development called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation. Recommendations in regard to such themes could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development. The World Summit also invited the Council to make full use of its high-level, coordination, operational activities and the general segments to effectively take into account all relevant aspects of the work of the United Nations on sustainable development.

6. At the third session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, held at United Nations Headquarters from 29 March to 2 April 2004 (see E/2004/44-E/C.16/2004/9), the Committee recommended that the Economic and Social Council reaffirm the role of the public service in the fulfilment of the specific national goals for socio-economic development, as they are key indicators of the Member States' attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the Committee reiterated its earlier recommendation to the Council that it devote one of its next high-level segments to the changing role of a public administration geared to

development, both economic and human, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with public service delivery as the pivotal element. The Committee of Experts proposed that the segment could be entitled:

> "A service-oriented public administration for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals".

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

7. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may wish to choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in the relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex) specified that the Council, at its high-level segment, should consider major issues for international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. The high-level segment should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

8. At its 49th plenary meeting, on 25 July 2003, the Economic and Social Council took note of draft decision II adopted by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the elements contained therein and decided to consider indigenous issues as a theme for its high-level segment in 2006, in accordance with established procedures set out in General Assembly resolution 50/227, (decision 2003/301, "High-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council").

9. In its resolution 2003/60, on public administration and development, the Council reiterated that strengthening public administration and the State were at the forefront of the development agenda to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and that revitalizing public administration was considered to be one of the essential components of economic and social development, and in that context decided to explore the possibility of considering that theme at a future high-level segment.

10. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 2001/27, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, when it considered the themes for its high-level and coordination segments, information about the functional commissions' multi-year work programmes. The requested information is contained in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2004, which will be before the Council.

11. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1

Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segments since 1995

1995	Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.
1996	International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities.
1997	Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade.
1998	Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for the developing countries and the least developed among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization.
1999	The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.
2000	Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.
2001	The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.
2002	The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development.
2003	Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

2004	Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

E. Proposal by the Secretary-General

12. The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly underscored the need for the implementation of the outcomes and goals of the United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. Last year, the Assembly brought this issue into sharper focus through the adoption of resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

13. In paragraph 7 of resolution 57/270 B the Assembly stressed that there was scope for a major event in 2005, possibly a comprehensive review, bearing in mind that the General Assembly had decided to review in 2005 the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, on the basis of a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. This resolution reinforces General Assembly resolution 57/144, in which the Assembly decided to consider convening a high-level plenary meeting during its sixtieth session on the review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and consideration of the quinquennial comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved towards implementing the Millennium Declaration.

14. **In the light of the above, the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider the following theme for its 2005 high-level segment: "Achieving the development goals of global conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals — challenges and opportunities".**

15. A review of the challenges and opportunities in the realization of the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2005 should help re-energize political engagement for achieving these goals. Given the Council's role in relation to international cooperation for development and its system-wide responsibilities, consideration by the high-level segment of this topic in 2005 would also enable the Council to make a distinct contribution to the review of the Millennium Declaration in 2005 by the General Assembly, in line with the relevant directives contained in General Assembly resolution 55/162 on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit.

II. Theme for the coordination segment

16. In its resolution 57/270 B the General Assembly reiterated that the Economic and Social Council should continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and thus promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields, in accordance with the

Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 50/227. Moreover, the Assembly decided that the Council should review, by means of a cross-sectoral approach, the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes, and assess its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits; that review and assessment should be carried out on an annual basis, focusing on a particular common cross-sectoral thematic issue, at the coordination segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, on the basis, inter alia, of a report to be submitted by the Secretary-General. In this regard, the Assembly requested the Council to establish, no later than 2004, a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session, based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, including the objectives, goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration, while respecting decisions to be taken by the Council regarding themes for 2004, bearing in mind decisions already taken by the Council regarding themes. This multi-year programme will enable the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to better prepare their contributions to those discussions, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council.

17. In its resolution 2003/6, the Economic and Social Council decided to take the necessary steps for the effective implementation of the provisions of resolution 57/270 B, welcomed the request by the General Assembly for the establishment of a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of the Council and expressed its determination to finalize the list of cross-sectoral thematic issues and the multi-year work programme for its coordination segment, with the aim of reaching a decision before the substantive session of 2004, and in that regard invited the Bureau to initiate informal consultations by January 2004. Informal consultations on this subject were under way at the time of preparation of the present report.

18. Box 2 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its coordination segments in previous years.

Box 2

Themes considered by the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segments

1995	Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.
1996	Coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes).
1997	Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.
	Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation.

1998	Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
1999	Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development.
2000	Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda.
2001	The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.
2002	Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.
2003	The role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.
2004	(i) Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. (ii) Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promote rural development in developing countries, with due consideration to least developed countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development.